

Marketing Welsh in an ambivalent context.

by Colin H Williams

Abstract

My purpose is twofold: first, to relate how the marketing issues of Welsh have been handled within a largely hegemonic English private sector and secondly to illustrate the approach to language marketing undertaken by the Welsh Language Board, thereby demonstrating how current strategy is tackling the issue of the under representation of Welsh within the economy. In comparison with Catalonia, Quebec or several other parts of the world, there is a relative paucity in Wales of operating multilingual enterprises and consequently little documented evidence of the relationship between majority and minority languages within the economy. This paper illustrates some of the initiatives undertaken in Wales recently but also points to some of the structural difficulties which any language revitalisation strategy will face in seeking to influence consumer behaviour in the private sector.

The Board has long realised that its first challenge was to increase the opportunities available to speak and use Welsh in a variety of contexts, and it has succeeded to a remarkable degree in transforming the linguistic landscape. A more profound challenge is to encourage people to take advantage of such opportunities and in this respect marketing, particularly to the private sector, will continue to grow as a key instrument of the Board's repertoire, the more so as it shares good practice and learns from the experiences of its European partners in the Language Planning Network

Summary

1. Introduction
2. SMEs and Welsh
3. Larger Enterprises and Welsh
4. Illustration of the Welsh Language Board's Marketing Strategy
 - 4.1. Iaith Gwaith/Working Welsh
 - 4.2. Give it a go/Cymraeg yn Gyntaf
 - 4.3 Semiotics, Iconography and Bilingual Design
 - 4.4. Welsh in the world of technology
5. Conclusion
6. References
7. Acknowledgement

1. Introduction

My purpose is twofold: first, to relate how the marketing issues of Welsh have been handled within a largely hegemonic English private sector and secondly to illustrate the approach to language marketing undertaken by the Welsh Language Board, thereby demonstrating how current strategy is tackling the issue of the under representation of Welsh within the economy. In comparison with Catalonia, Quebec or several other parts of the world, there is a relative paucity in Wales of operating multilingual enterprises and consequently little documented evidence of the relationship between majority and minority languages within the economy.¹

The UK economy, and more particularly its marketing, advertising and selling divisions, operates in a diverse linguistic manner. English is dominant, but given the global basis of many of its companies there is a surprisingly large multilingual presence reflected both in its personnel and in the information supplied with supporting documentation and advertising. Added to this is the increasingly multicultural basis of the UK population and the sophisticated nature of marketing techniques designed to appeal to niche target audiences, both at home and abroad. Greater London contains the most diverse multilingual population within the EU. One-third of London's primary school children have a first language other than English. The Inner London Education Authority records over 148 distinct mother tongue languages spoken at home. Clearly then parts of the UK have a strong multilingual character despite the apparently poor reputation Britons have for learning other languages.

¹ The key exceptions would be very large international companies such as British Aerospace, Bosch Engineering, Ford Motors and several Japanese manufacturers such as Panasonic and Sony who have been very successful in South Wales.

In Wales there is the added dimension of promoting the Welsh language within as many spheres as is practicable. Up until the beginning of the twentieth century Welsh figured prominently within the industrial export-oriented economy based on coal, iron, steel and slate which animated the rise of world capitalism. Between 1870 and 1918 the world price for coal, copper and tinplate was set in the Financial Exchanges of Cardiff and Swansea and Welsh speaking industrialist, engineers, craftsmen, mariners and labourers contributed to the industrial development of Europe, North America, South Africa, Australasia and Latin America. The Welsh language dominated the rural economy and agricultural services of Wales. Consequently Welsh has a very rich repertoire of specialist terms, vocabulary, dictionaries and technical literature suited both to the agrarian and heavy industrial sectors. Thus current attempts to influence the economy are more about regaining lost ground than they are penetrating entirely new spheres for the Welsh language. However, throughout the twentieth century Anglicisation and the closer integration of Wales within the British state and public life lead to a decline of the language and to a loss of purchase in several key sectors. Initial attempts to revitalise Welsh in the fifties and sixties concentrated on the education system and the public sector and it is only in the past fifteen years that a sustained attempt has been made to influence the private sector also. The advent of formal language planning has created an opportunity to think strategically about the future of the Welsh language which has developed a momentum of its own which is now showing some real results.

The Welsh Language Act 1993 provided a statutory framework for the treatment of English and Welsh on the basis of equality. Its chief policy instrument was the strengthened Welsh Language Board, established on 21 December 1993, as a non-departmental statutory organisation². It had three main duties:

1. Advising organisations which were preparing language schemes on the mechanism of operating the central principle of the Act, that the Welsh and English languages should be treated on a basis of equality.
2. Advising those who provide services to the public in Wales on issues relevant to the Welsh language.
3. Advising central government on issues relating to the Welsh language.

The Welsh Language Act 1993 details key steps to be taken by the Welsh Language Board and by public sector bodies in the preparation of Welsh language schemes. These language schemes³ are designed to implement the central principle of the Act, which is to treat Welsh and English on the basis of equality, and they are the principal instrument by which the promotion of Welsh in the public sector is to be secured. Between 1995 and 1999 a total of 67 language schemes had been approved including all 22 local authorities. On the eve of UK devolution in 1999 notices had been issued to a further 59 bodies to prepare schemes⁴. By today some 334 schemes have been approved and the Board has developed a mature approach to their approval and implementation. Undoubtedly such schemes have been very instrumental in changing the character of bilingual services within public authorities, but just how effective they have been in changing the linguistic choice and behaviour of both providers and the general public is difficult to evaluate.⁵

The Welsh Language Board's strategic goal is to enable the language to become self-sustaining and secure as a medium of communication in Wales. It has set itself four priorities; 1) to increase the numbers of Welsh-speakers; 2) to provide more opportunities to use the language; and 3) change the habits of language use and encourage people to take advantage of the opportunities provided, and 4) to strengthen Welsh as a community language,

The phrase 'promotion' figures strongly in the Board's public statements and language marketing initially was seen as an adjunct to the Board's attempt to establish the legitimacy of using Welsh within as many domains as practicable. Throughout its first decade the Board undertook a policy of consensus building, in accordance with the wishes of the political elite to depoliticise the language. Stealth politics rather than enforcement and confrontation were the order of the day.

² The first Welsh Language Board, established in 1989, was a non-statutory advisory body answerable to the Secretary of State for Wales.

³ The legislative basis of Welsh language promotion is based primarily on the principle of empowerment. The question of enforcement against recalcitrant bodies is less well documented under the Act.

⁴ Under the spirit of the 1993 Act, the Board has also developed partnerships with the 22 Unitary Authorities through Rhwydwaith (Network), with the Welsh Consumer Council, the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action and with a range of private sector organisations. During the financial year 1997-97 grants totalling £2,254,792 were distributed under the Board's main grants scheme to organisations as varied as the National Eisteddfod, the Welsh Books Council and Shelter Cymru (Welsh Language Board, 1998). During the financial year 2005-6 this figure had risen to

⁵ Systematic monitoring of the schemes by the Language Board as part of its audit function reveals a wide variation in behaviour patterns. An independent attempt to evaluate a sample of the schemes has been undertaken recently by the project 'From Act to Action'. For details see the EBLUL website.

Historically the Board has focussed its activities on the public sector because it had a statutory remit to promote Welsh and this was the basis of its legitimacy in law and fact (Williams 2005)⁶. A critical area of sociolinguistic maintenance is language transmission both within the family and within the education system. Thus in the mid-nineties a campaign was launched to boost language acquisition, principally through the statutory 5-16 age education provision, life long learning, and latecomer centres. In the late nineties the Board experimented in marketing the language to young parents so that they would transmit Welsh to their children. This initiative developed into the successful TWF Family Language Transfer programme, which has been extended to several locations in Wales. The project sought to use the influence of midwives and health professionals to inform young parents of the advantages of raising their children bilingually.

Once the Board's legitimacy to operate as an element of public service and community life was established, the Board turned to several outstanding issues of which it had been aware for some years. The chief issue was the recognition that to be truly effective holistic language planning has to address the economic and commercial influences on language choice and social behaviour. Thus within the statutory remit to promote Welsh, the Board has gradually placed a greater emphasis on marketing a wide range of activities so as to make the experience of using Welsh a more positive feature of social life. Marketing any language is a process fraught with difficulties because it is hard to derive a cause and effect interpretation of the impact of many marketing campaigns. The only certain rule in this field is the law of unintended consequences. Prediction is more of an art than a science for language marketing, more likely to have an indirect and cumulative effect on decision making and behaviour, rather than an identifiably trajectory with known outcomes⁷.

In 2001 the Board hosted international seminars on language marketing as a prelude to developing its own initiatives in the field. The chief lesson learned was that whereas the public sector could be influenced directly by ideological, legislative and political processes, commercial organizations needed sound economic reasons for using a regional or minority language. In situations, such as Catalonia or Quebec, where the target language is spoken by a majority, it was possible to adopt a legislative approach to language promotion, relying on the courts to uphold government policy within the private sector.⁸ But in minority situations, where binding legislation is not an option, there is a pressing need for sound arguments, innovative marketing and cost-benefit analysis to justify the increased utility of the former discriminated language.

Thus the crunch question was how would marketing the language fit into the wider Board strategy and how could quite distinct target audiences, including many within the private sector, be reached? It is claimed that the economic benefits of the Welsh language are increasingly being recognized in terms of improving the quality of customer service; attracting new customers; increasing customer loyalty; harnessing goodwill at relatively low cost ;gaining a marketing edge over competitors ; enhancing public relations effort. If so why the need to market a language?

The principal justification is that employing a minority language, such as Welsh, is a USP (unique selling point) which differentiates companies from their competitors. But there are many other reasons for arguing that private companies should use Welsh more, such as the fact that it demonstrates pride and respect for regional culture and community; that is, it gives a local focus to multinationals; it can help attract new customers; it generates good will and loyalty among customers; it improves the perceived quality of products and services; it enhances public relations activities; it is perceived to be part of the current best practice in communication; it introduces an element of surprise (WLB, 2001).

Marketing in minority languages is not without its difficulties. Costs are perceived as a major barrier to the widespread adoption of more sympathetic use of the minority language. There is no

⁶ The Board also had the right to extend its remit in other sectors covered by the Act, and gave priority to education and training. By June 1998 the Welsh education schemes of two local authorities had been approved and a further 15 were being developed (Welsh Language Board, 1998). Further and higher education colleges, together with Welsh-medium pre-school provision have also received attention. Since 1998 the Board has co-ordinated a national strategy for Welsh for Adults, and this sector has benefited from a more robust and systematic provision of service, accreditation of Adult Tutors, resource development and strategic intervention related to skills acquisition in key areas of the economy, such as insurance and banking, retail sales and the legal profession. In total grants of £2,027,000 were distributed in the year 1997-98 to local authorities to promote Welsh language education

⁷ Also the sense of reality, as defined by language planners and market professionals, can be at variance with the perceptions held by the target audience, therefore interpretation has to be cautious and well grounded in evidence.

⁸ For an incisive and original comparison of the role of language planning within the private sector of Catalonia and Wales see Puigdevall i Serralvo (2006).

doubt that bi/multi-lingualism involves an additional cost to operators. But initial cynicism can be overcome by a progressive introduction of bilingual practices, by phased, well-planned developments and by setting realistic budgets, by adapting work practices, enhanced staff training, and by influencing customer perception. In time the start up costs become absorbed as general running costs and this figures as an improvement in the company's profile.

Basic marketing principles can also be employed to define the product, define the market(s), and inform the effective introduction of a product within the available resources (human and financial) and to conduct research and evaluation.

Undoubtedly the socio linguistic context is critical to success. Thus it is pertinent to ask whether there are any political, legislative or socio-psychological reasons for using any selected language(s)? These would include whether or not the target language was sufficiently robust to be used in marketing campaigns and new product design? What percentage of the relevant population speaks or understands the target language? What is the level of literacy in the minority language? Are there age, gender or regional differences in the quality of spoken and written languages? Are there different language combinations among different age/ethnic groups? Is language choice a desired goal?

Such context-related issues are vital, but independent of the actual marketing campaigns adopted. Thus at all levels cost-effective bilingual marketing has to take account of a number of other issues. At the level of an individual company these might include the refurbishing or opening of new premises; the renewing of signage; reviewing corporate identity; ordering new stationery; recruiting new members of staff; developing new products or services; targeting new markets; reprinting literature or creating new material; devising new point of sales materials; developing websites or adapting IT provision; local sponsorship possibilities; new direct mail campaigns or newsletters.

Other issues raised in the 'Marketing in Minority Languages' seminars (WLB 2001) focussed on best practice in marketing. International participants agreed that when the two target languages are used in advertising or in product design they should be of equal size, readability and profile. When producing information of any kind, the principles of integrated bilingualism suggest that the customer should be able to read both languages side by side. However, if separate language versions are required, both should be equally accessible and the minority language version should not be of inferior quality. Decisions need to be made as to whether to adopt a formal or informal style language. A preference was expressed that material was usually more user-friendly in the target language. As translation is a specialist skill, the temptation to do it cheaply should be avoided as errors are expensive to correct after materials and signs are produced. Clearly in well-developed languages with a supportive infra-structure, continuous up-dating of spell-checkers, glossaries and specialist dictionaries is required. Given the paucity of resources there is an understandable tendency to focus only on the most visible aspects of marketing such as signage, logos and corporate identities. But to be truly effective minority language promotion should also consider print material, communication, correspondence and e-mail, packaging and product labelling, advertising and publicity, IT and ATMs, promotional campaigns and public relations together with consciousness raising both for employees and the customers.

Even if such practices are adopted there is a tendency to assume that they automatically promote the increased use of a minority language. Verification of such effectiveness is often sought in mass survey questionnaires. However, attitudinal evidence and actual behaviour change are two very different aspects of this conundrum. Thus there is a constant need for research and training. Companies need to undertake linguistic skills audits; communication training, monitoring and evaluation, systematic sampling of good practice from elsewhere, mainstream the language dimensions into economic behaviour and choice, undertake time-series data collection. These issues, though often advocated, are rarely adopted in real-world situations for the reasons offered by Puigdevall and Williams (2002).

An acute issue which influences initial behaviour is how one identifies the minority speaker on first contact. The onus is often put on the employees by wearing a name badge or other symbol which suggests the ability to operate in more than one target language. Thus greeting and thanking become important signifiers of behaviour and of customer satisfaction. A more thorough adoption of the target language has implications for recruiting and training, for the respect of customer rights or expectations. This aspect has received a fair deal of attention in Wales through the

operation of language agencies such as Cwmni Iaith Cyf⁹ who specialise in undertaking language skills audits and training plans. However, far less attention has been paid to workers expectations, fears and language rights. In part this is because of a relative lack of interest in this issue by the larger trade unions and the Wales CBI, together with the relative absence of court-cases to test the resolve of major corporations. Influential individuals and human rights organisations in Wales, such as Cefn¹⁰ have fought to secure a more equal treatment of workers, but their success has been sporadic and legislation in this field is woefully underdeveloped.

It is evident that dealing with private sector variables, motivations and structures requires not only a different form of language planning initiatives but also the commitment of hitherto reluctant participants in the process. Too often there has been an assumption that conventional language planning practices derived essentially from public sector experience will automatically transfer to the private sector, with or without little modification. This will not suffice any longer. We need to engage in more sustainable methods of language intervention in the private sector.

2. SMEs and Welsh

Little detailed knowledge and systematic data are available to interpret and work for the promotion of Welsh in the private sector. This is a serious weakness and hampers the planning process. A recent research project by Puigdevall i Serralvo (2006) sought to investigate how and under what conditions Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) could be encouraged to be more responsive to the needs of the Welsh speaking consumer, worker and employer.

Empirical fieldwork was undertaken on a range of SMEs in the predominantly Welsh speaking areas of Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire. The SMEs were located in the sectors of food and drink manufacture, tourism, retailing and services. The research sought to illuminate the following questions:

1. What is the interrelationship between the economy and the Welsh language? [E →← L]
2. How can the Welsh language and its associated culture be mobilised as assets to contribute to improving the economy? [L → E]
3. In what way does strengthening the economy impact upon language use? [E → L]
4. Under what conditions do companies choose to promote Welsh as a language of the workplace and/or a language for marketing purposes and self-identification?
5. What are the barriers which militate against the more widespread use of Welsh even within those companies who use Welsh to a certain extent?
6. What advantages and disadvantages do companies claim they derive from operating in a bilingual fashion?

The research project also sought to investigate some policy implications such as: -

1. To what extent and in what manner are such issues capable of being influenced by the policies of official agencies such as the Welsh Language Board and Menter a Busnes (Enterprise and Business Agency) and the political decisions of the National Assembly for Wales?
2. What specific practices are employed by SMEs to nurture the greater use of Welsh?
3. To what extent is there a significant economic difference if the language promotion is undertaken on behalf of a target group by a state agency, and to what extent are the considerations altered if the promotional work is undertaken by the speakers themselves within the community and local economy?

Puigdevall i Serralvo (2006) sampled 33 companies from the food and drink manufacturing, tourism and leisure, retailing and service sectors, with special attention to information technology, design and printing businesses. The fieldwork elucidated the use of Welsh in eight aspects of a company's activities namely: employment, recruitment and training; services and image; the costs and benefits of bilingualism for the company; problems and concerns; their needs and knowledge of support services related to increasing the use of the language; the cost-effectiveness of advertising and labelling bilingually; their expectations for the future in relation to the actions of the National Assembly for Wales and to significant actors within the private sector.

The results reveal that Welsh is used more in oral communications than in written transactions where there is a general lack of competence in Welsh written skills. Welsh speaking managers and

⁹ Cwmni Iaith Cyf 's web site address is <http://www.cwmni-iaith.com>

¹⁰ Cefn's web site address is <http://www.cefn.net>

owners were more proactive in the use of Welsh in their companies than non-Welsh speaking businessmen and women. Welsh was deemed to be useful for many situations, and most managers and owners valued Welsh speaking employees. However, the research revealed that Welsh speaking customers switched easily from Welsh to English and did not complain about the lack of such services through the medium of Welsh. In addition the Welsh language has a positive symbolic value for marketing and labelling purposes in all companies.

In companies which have a strong presence of Welsh speaking staff, Welsh has a communicative function both for internal administrative purposes and in dealing with customers. Being able to provide services in Welsh is one of their main differentiation assets as they attract Welsh speaking customers whose preferred language is Welsh. A second group of companies, whose main working language is English, can adapt to accommodate those customers who choose to use Welsh. However, for companies whose exclusive working language is English, even if there might be a fairly important presence of Welsh speaking staff, the Welsh language has a symbolic function for product differentiation, but the daily use of Welsh is very marginal.

The research identified that there is a need to consciously seek opportunities to add value to economic development – i.e. to increase and improve the quality of its impact; and at the same time add value to linguistic development. For example, in considering the need to take advantage of the 'Knowledge Economy', in addition to the technical skills (scientific, engineering, and computing) and the value added skills represented by linguistic diversity, there is need for less obvious skills such as creativity and imagination. Traditionally these skills have a high priority in Welsh language culture, but tend to be more prevalent in literature and the arts than in enterprise and commerce. Developing these latter opportunities could be explored creatively in a way that integrates with other trends such as developing the ability of people in Wales to improve the quality of their economic activity; targeting economic sectors which have significant bilingual potential; enabling the private and public sectors jointly to develop sectors and opportunities in proactive ways; focussing on building new skills, especially within Information and Communication Technology (ICT); together with integrating developments in infrastructure, property rights, land use and regional economic planning. (Williams and Puigdevall i Serralvo, 2002). SMEs are rightly regarded as a major contributor to economic and community stability and are now being re-assessed because two decades of attracting capital intensive inward investment has not brought the required spread of jobs, especially in peri-rural areas.

3. Larger Enterprises and Welsh

But what of the larger enterprises, how do they fare in relation to the promotion and use of the Welsh language? While large multinational enterprises are well used to operating multilingual, until recently such companies were antipathetic to the use of Welsh, for they were neither required by law nor obliged by significant consumer demand to use Welsh in their advertising, marketing and service divisions. Historically consumer complaints and the campaigns of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg and Cefn had proved vital in drawing attention to the inequities in the treatment of Welsh and English within the private sector. Nevertheless by a judicious mix of public initiative and private persuasion, several leading enterprises in the retail, insurance, banking and utilities sectors have employed Welsh to very good effect. In seeking to persuade companies to adopt Welsh, the Welsh Language Board's Private Sector team has adopted a two-pronged approach. The first is to convince companies of the economic and social worth of operating bilingually by offering advice and, business grants which allow companies to produce bilingual materials. This has extended to Linkline Welsh which offers a short translation and menu translation service as well as the Iaith Gwaith/Working Welsh scheme to show customers that a Welsh language service is available.

The second tactic is to develop a personal dialogue with key personnel in the target company. Thus Team Members from the WLB would liaise with, for example, Marks and Spencer, when they were opening a new store in Bangor in 2005, to make extensive use of Welsh in their signs, communications and store layout. The same approach was adopted when Ikea opened their store in Cardiff in 2003. Prior to this key banks such as HSBC and influential companies such as British Telecom, Tesco and Asda, had adopted a systematic bilingual policy which ranged from their iconography, customer relations, billing services and complaints to their financial support for national Welsh language promotional events, such as the annual WLB Bilingual Design Awards and Learner of the Year Prizes. In such a manner selected international companies become more identified with Wales and with the health of the Welsh language in particular.

Several comments may be made about this trend. First it is a very welcome development for it identifies Welsh with modernity, with success and with 'normal' everyday commercial activities.

Second providing a bilingual service not only satisfies customer demand but it also provides employment opportunities for those with the appropriate linguistic and professional skills, further strengthening the argument that bilingualism is an economic asset. Thirdly identifying Welsh as one of a number of languages which may be used by a High Street Bank, insurance company or supermarket chain normalises the language and reduces the insidious accusation that Welsh is a dead or irrelevant language. However, there is a down side also. The most troubling is the relatively low take-up to rate of selected services, whether it be ATM banking services in Welsh, billing requests or use of Welsh language customer support help-lines. In time if such activities do not reach a satisfactory threshold then enterprises may be required to rethink their bilingual strategies. The second worrying trend is that most of these services represent a thin patina of bilingualism; once the initial point of contact has been passed it becomes very difficult to engage with the personnel of large enterprises through the medium of Welsh in most cases.

The Welsh Language Board is conscious of these lacunae and has recently launched its Language Strategy for the Private Sector up to July 2009. (WLB July 2006). The strategy's core message is that Welsh and bilingualism are assets to any business in Wales, and that it is a modern medium which should be adopted, to varying degrees, by the whole range of companies who have a presence in Wales¹¹. The strategy is comprised of a contextual interpretation and an action plan for implementing the strategy which identifies the main audiences (consumers as well as companies) and the businesses which should be targeted as a priority, the practical support which can be offered, the most effective ways of working with partners, and the need for regular research and evaluation. Two interesting developments are the idea of extending agreed language schemes to the private sector and encouraging elements within the public sector which have a Welsh Language Scheme to demand that their third party suppliers from the private sector who undertake contract work comply with the requirements of their language schemes. Both of these initiatives will extend the practice of operating bilingually somewhat.

The strategy's implementation is focussed mainly on high profile companies such as supermarkets, retail parks, high street chain stores, banks, utility companies and mobile phone companies. The main emphasis is on increasing the use of the language visually and aurally within these companies and also orally by staff when in direct contact with Welsh speaking customers. The Board has determined the following action points for its strategy: -

- i) Identify and target 20 major companies with the intention of getting them to commit to make significantly more visual and aural use of Welsh within their businesses.
- ii) Build on existing relationships and create new links within target companies.
- iii) Maintain a working relationship with key individuals by regular correspondence and meetings to persuade and provide support with regards to the use of Welsh.
- iv) Work with Local Authorities and the Board's Local Authority Unit to encourage the use of bilingual signage as part of the processes of planning permission for new developments.
- v) Refer companies to providers of language awareness and training sessions for staff on how to deal politely and efficiently with customers who request a service through the medium of Welsh.
- vi) Create and update relevant case studies for each sector in order to encourage competition and show how Welsh can bring added value to a business, as well as commercial benefit.
- vii) Encourage and assist large companies to produce language policies. We will facilitate this by producing simple sector specific templates which will be available on-line for use by companies. (Welsh Language Board, 2006b)

A second focus is that which Menter a Busnes and Williams and Puigdevall identified in the nineties, namely the SMEs whose owners are supportive of the language or who have a good proportion of Welsh-speaking staff. The Board recognises that such companies form the backbone of Welsh-speaking communities and increasing their use of Welsh go some way to normalising the use of Welsh on a daily basis in the business world.¹²

This campaign draws on earlier WLB marketing and private sector activity which offers practical support in the following manner.

¹¹ The three aims are a) to increase the use of Welsh in the Private Sector by both large companies who are market leaders, and small and medium-sized companies; b) to normalise the use of Welsh in the Private Sector by managers, staff and customers; c) to provide practical advice and support to businesses who wish to develop bilingual services.

¹² By working with the Mentrau Iaith and Board partners, priority will be given to Tourism and Leisure; Media; Agriculture and Building; mall high street businesses e.g. family stores, and professional services.

4. Illustration of the Welsh Language Board's Marketing Strategy

4.1 *Iaith Gwaith/Working Welsh*

Providing an opportunity to use Welsh is one challenge, ensuing that people actually take advantage of such opportunities is quite another. *Iaith Gwaith* (Working Welsh), launched in 2000, sought to increase the use of Welsh by promoting the fact that a bilingual service was available to customers. It aimed to encourage employees who have daily contact with members of the public to wear a badge, enabling customers to identify staff who are able and happy to speak Welsh. The scheme included a range of print material, available free of charge to organizations and may be viewed on the Board's website.¹³

However, the scheme was not an automatic success. An independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the scheme revealed that there was a very low level of awareness among the sampled businesses. There was little spontaneous specific recall of the scheme's name/ branding in any of the consumer groups, while many respondents did recall a badge system unprompted. 80% of general businesses had never seen or heard of the *Iaith Gwaith* scheme. Some 72% of businesses, who received *Iaith Gwaith* materials, remember doing so (after being prompted). Yet a majority of the businesses had themselves initiated contact regarding *Iaith Gwaith*, rather than being approached by the WLB. Some 65% of businesses who remembered receiving materials had requested them from the WLB (Beaufort, 2002).

Thus despite an intensive marketing campaign the first foray of the Welsh Language Board into this sector was not very successful. The general lack of awareness of the *Iaith Gwaith* scheme was a worrying issue; in that only 1 in 5 of the (SMEs) in Wales had heard of the scheme.

The WLB bilingual speaker identity badge was clearly a most important resource but worked most effectively in conjunction with supporting materials, particularly window stickers, open/closed signs and other semiotic material. The respondents reported that the then current design looked tired and dated. Thus the WLB took the opportunity to introduce a new, more contemporary design and adopted a new corporate image in all its publications, office spaces and visuals (see above and the WLB website for illustrations).

In seeking to influence the activities of larger organizations, it was argued that the WLB should work in partnership with key organizations to integrate the *Iaith Gwaith* branding to the company's own ID badges/ literature. However, it was recognized that information provided in such integrated literature needed to define clearly the purpose of the scheme so that the *Iaith Gwaith* message would not be lost because of the reluctance of large companies to exhibit other heavily branded materials.¹⁴

The WLB adopted the following key recommendations: - print material should contain clear and concise messages in order to ensure a better understanding of the scheme; a programme of awareness building was needed at the first stage, aimed at consumer/ business audience; greater use could be made of a TV advertising campaign, using S4C/ ITV together with press advertisements in English and Welsh papers including business magazines and trade papers; this then should be followed by direct marketing campaign to businesses/ organizations (mail-outs) to increase take-up of scheme, targeting the retail, tourism and hospitality sectors. The revamped *Iaith Gwaith* scheme is now far more effective, interactive and project-based.¹⁵

4.2 *Give it a go/Cymraeg yn Gyntaf*

A second scheme started in 2003, *Cymraeg yn Gyntaf*, sought to persuade organisations and individuals to offer and to use a Welsh or bilingual service. It also sought to encourage the public to feel confident about using those services, because earlier research had demonstrated that often when there was a choice of language service people still did not use Welsh. The reasons given were predictable but still difficult to ameliorate. They included the fact that people were not used to receiving a service in Welsh; or they took for granted that a Welsh language service was not available and did not feel confident enough to ask for a service in Welsh if they were not sure.

¹³ The Welsh Language Board web site is www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk

¹⁴ The phraseology must be friendly, non-confrontational and non-forceful, eg. 'happy to speak Welsh' instead of 'speak Welsh'.

¹⁵ Thus, for example, there are two distinct badges. Both represent the mark of the Board based on a speech bubble and quotation marks. One has no written text but signifies that the wearer is happy and willing to speak Welsh. The other conveys a message, 'Dw i'n dysgu Cymraeg' 'I am learning Welsh' and invites people to initiate a conversation.

Consequently the *Cymaeg yn Gyntaf* campaign's main target audience is people who speak Welsh; organizations that can offer Welsh language services; workers who can offer a Welsh language face to face service. Many of the messages would be familiar to a Catalan audience, such as '*Dechreuwch bob sgwrs yn Gymraeg*' Start all conversations in Welsh'. The slogans and messages of the first Catalan campaigns, such as "*el català depèn de vostè*" (Catalan depends on you), "*el català és cosa de tots*" (Catalan is everybody's business) or "*el català per respecte a tu mateix i a els altres*" (Catalan for self respect and respect to others) were very general and sought to change the attitudes of the whole population. Having recognised that general messages only go so far, the Welsh, like the Catalans, have targeted different audiences with specific messages.

In 2003 the campaign targeted seven towns, Rhuthin, Llanrwst, Y Bala, Aberystwyth, Ammanford, Caernarfon and Fishguard and was organised by a working party of officers from *Mentrau Iaith* (Community Action Initiatives), Local Language Plans and the Welsh Language Board. The WLB commissioned a before and after evaluation by MRUK on the impact of the campaign.

Advertising, marketing materials and local activities were chosen for detailed evaluation. The visual, iconographic and semiotic elements included local faces and local strap lines tailored to suit the needs of the different areas.¹⁶ More generic items used included street banners, billboards, posters, and credit cards – contact information, counter signs, window stickers, balloons, information leaflets, coasters/beer mats, bios and panels. Local and national media attention was secured by placing stories in local papers (*papurau bro*), engaging in lively items on local radio e.g. Radio Ceredigion, national radio Radio Cymru, and items on '*Prynhawn Da*' an afternoon magazine programme on S4C. Over 70 local activities were arranged ranging from a shop window competition, a St David's Day gig, a Pub Eisteddfod, a Sali Mali Tour, the opening of a '*Wythnos Cymraeg yn Gyntaf*' shop, various street and community shows, a sponsored bike tour from Fishguard to Cardigan and evening concerts featuring young bands.

The MRUK results indicated that 6 out of 10 people remember seeing the campaign, while the posters and banners made the biggest impact. Passive reception and recall is one thing, securing a change of behaviour quite another. Thus 44% of the sample said that the campaign has succeeded in persuading them to use more Welsh. 35% said that they are more likely to use Welsh first when they greet someone new. 30% said in the future they are less likely to assume that the other person does not speak Welsh. The WLB has adapted the campaign by cutting down on the range and re-designing more flexible materials.

The most effective means of influencing behaviour modification was local face to face interaction. Thus far less emphasis is given now to national campaigns with strong messages promoting Welsh and more attention is given to the quality of the experience of using Welsh in real contexts. The marketing techniques are more interactive, requiring a response and additional action. The materials produced are a stimulus to bring people together. In October 2006 a major campaign will focus on drawing people together over a drink (with WLB labelled beverages) to encourage socialising and act as a prompt to develop awareness and further initiatives in the local area. Similar successful consciousness-raising tactics have been adopted in the UK by the Macmillan Cancer Relief campaign. 'The Biggest Coffee Morning in the World'. A second, novel element is to encourage residents of the 17 targeted towns, to go on an organised walk for at least 17 minutes on the 17th of October.

Thus the current emphasis is on locality, interactivity and quality experiences. For the coming year the Board has decided to eschew many of the conventional passive marketing techniques such as national bill board advertising and general messages, preferring to emphasise action, involvement and engagement.

A second major revision is the attempt to link the fortunes of Welsh with an emphasis on sustainable development and organic, ecological principles (Williams 1991). It is argued that if the revitalisation of the language can be seen in positive terms as a key element of an organically derived philosophy, concerned with pluralism, diversity and integrity, then marketing the language should be accompanied by a commitment to environmentally friendly techniques and the use of recyclable materials. Thus much of the promotional material is printed on recycled paper; the overall effect is to give the impression that the Board is concerned with the quality both of the natural environment and the life chances of residents.

¹⁶ For illustration please visit the Welsh Language Board web site at <http://www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk>

4.3. Semiotics, Iconography and Bilingual Design

A further illustration is in the field of bilingual design. The Welsh Language Board offers advice to designers on the benefits of bilingual design and for the past four years has been organising the Bilingual Design Awards, which rewards the best in bilingual design in a variety of fields. These design awards, and the accompanying publicity, undoubtedly raises the profile not only of the finalists but also of the awareness of the design industry itself. In time, the novelty of including Welsh material on advertising and information displays is internalised as more and more companies and agencies adopt a bilingual practice as a matter of course. Such normalisation techniques follow the good experience of Catalonia and Quebec and have been very successful in Wales. The WLB's Marketing Unit also works with organisations to market the advantages of bilingual skills in the workplace, in further and higher education and in general social life.

4.4. Welsh in the world of technology

Bilingual skills in the market place, high quality design execution and interactivity all depend on the capacity and infrastructure provided by contemporary Information Technology. The WLB has sought to make key products from within IT available and as stress-free as possible so as to induce language switching between the target languages. The aim is to present Welsh as a fully functional language well capable of executing the standard repertoire of tasks one would expect in a modern office or educational environment. The Welsh Language Board has worked in partnership with Microsoft and in 2004 free Welsh Language Interface Packs were launched for Microsoft Office 2003 & Windows XP. ¹⁷Other features include a list of IT terms available at National Database of Terms; translation tasks available at 'Total Assistant'; spellcheckers/grammar checkers & dictionaries are available at Microsoft Welsh language spellchecker (Office XP only); also available is 'Cysgliad' which includes CySill, a grammar and spellchecking program for Welsh and 'CysGeir', which enables you to find words in either Welsh or English from within your word processing application.

Language improvement skills may be honed from Cymarfer y Gweithle – basic/higher level Cymarfer Colegau – basic/higher level while many other features are available.¹⁸

5. Conclusion

There is very little sustained research and evaluation of the role of Welsh in the private sector. Occasionally large enterprises who engage in mass survey analysis of their customers profile would include questions related to Welsh and bilingual services. But by and large such activity as exists is prompted by the strategic considerations of the Welsh Language Board, and much of the normal action is gentle, behind the scenes persuasion by a sympathetic network of loosely aligned language promoters. The marketing approach of the WLB has been evolving to target more specific audiences and to increase the level of interactivity and self-sustaining projects which the Board chooses to initiate but not necessarily maintain over the long term. The aim is to internalise language choice behaviour not to create an additional dependency on WLB directives or finances. Within an overall annual budget of £13m in 2006 some £2.1m is expended on marketing. Both the Private Sector Team and the Marketing Unit are small in comparison with the total staff resources of the WLB which numbers 75. But each project and initiative is designed to fit into an overall WLB strategy whereby synergy, mutually reinforcing campaigns and expenditure are all carefully calculated to calibrate with the activities of the other sections of the WLB and its many partners.

The Board has long realised that its first challenge was to increase the opportunities available to speak and use Welsh in a variety of contexts, and it has succeeded to a remarkable degree in transforming the linguistic landscape. A more profound challenge is to encourage people to take advantage of such opportunities and in this respect marketing, particularly to the private sector, will continue to grow as a key instrument of the Board's repertoire, the more so as it shares good practice and learns from the experiences of its European partners in the Language Planning Network.¹⁹

¹⁷ For details please visit the Language Interface Packs for Office 2003 and Windows ® XP on this website. The WLB is also co-funding a project to create a bilingual version of SwyddAgored/OpenOffice. A Welsh language spellchecker is already available for OpenOffice and details of the project are available on Agored's website.

¹⁸ The Welsh Language Board has supported the adaptation of the European Computer Driving License into Welsh. For Open Source Software in Welsh visit the Meddal website. For a selection of ICT Equipment in other Regional or Minority Languages please consult Opera – browse the web in several Celtic languages ; Basque; Catalan

¹⁹ For details see language planning.com

6. References

- Edwards, V. and Newcombe, L. (2003) *Evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Twf Project, which encourages parents to transmit the language to their children*. Cardiff: The Welsh Language Board.
- Gardner, N. Puigdevall i Serralvo, M. and Williams, C.H. (2000) *Language Revitalization in Comparative Context: Ireland, the Basque Country and Catalonia*, in Williams, C.H. (Ed). 'Language Revitalization: Policy and Planning in Wales' Cardiff, University of Wales Press. Pp. 311-61.
- Menter a Busnes (1994) *A Quiet Revolution: The framework of the academic report*. Aberystwyth: Menter a Busnes.
- Puigdevall i Serralvo, M. (2006) *The Challenge of Language Planning in the Private Sector: Welsh and Catalan Perspectives, unpublished PhD thesis*, School of Welsh, Cardiff University.
- Welsh Assembly Government (2003) *Iaith Pawb: A National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
- Welsh Language Board (1998a) *1997-98 Annual Report and Accounts*. Cardiff: Welsh Language Board.
- Welsh Language Board (1998b) *Meeting the Translation Requirements of the National Assembly for Wales*, Cardiff: Welsh Language Board.
- Welsh Language Board (2001) *Marketing in Minority Languages: A Report on a European Workshop on Marketing in Minority Languages held in Porthmeirion, 25-27th June*, Cardiff: The Welsh Language Board.
- Welsh Language Board (2004) *Marketing Strategy*. Cardiff: The Welsh Language Board.
- Welsh Language Board (2006a) *Welsh Language Use Survey*. Cardiff: The Welsh Language Board.
- Welsh Language Board (2006b) *Private Sector Strategy*. Cardiff: The Welsh Language Board.
- Williams, C.H. 1991 *Language Planning and Social Change: Ecological Speculations*, in D. Marshall (ed.), *Focus on Language Planning: Essays in Honour of Joshua A. Fishman*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 53-74.
- Williams, C.H. (2005) "The Role of Para-governmental Institutions in Language Planning" *Supreme Court Law Review*, Vol. 31, pp. 61-83, and also in F. Braën and Y. Le Bouthillier (eds.), *Language, Constitutionalism and Minorities/Langues, constitutionlisme et minorities*, pp. 139-59. LexisNexis Butterworths, Markham, Ontario. ISBN 0 433 45148 3
- Williams, C.H. and Puigdevall i Serralvo, M. (2002), 'Private Sector Initiatives: The Catalan and Welsh Experience of Language Planning' paper delivered at the XLVIII Anglo-Catalan Society Conference, 15-17 November, 2002, Cardiff University.

7. Acknowledgement

I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Rhiannon Glynn, Welsh Language Board, in providing guidance on the operation of the Board's marketing campaigns and to Meirion Prys Jones, the WLB Chief Executive, for discussing the Board's strategic overview. Although I am a Member of the Welsh Language Board, these are personal reflections and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the WLB.

Colin H Williams
Language Policy and Planning Research Unit
School of Welsh
Cardiff University
williamsch@cardiff.ac.uk